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ABSTRACT

This brief presented to the Canadian Special Senate Committee on Poverty seeks to establish some workable definition of "the poor" in Canadian society. Attempts are made to outline the potential of education for promoting the economic well-being of Canadians. It is found that the poor often get the poorer schools, programs, and teachers, rather than the special and superior programs which they appear to require. These inequities tend to be compounded by regional inequalities in ability to finance education. Throughout the brief, particular emphasis is placed on the severe educational problems of the Indians, Eskimos, Metis, and Negroes. It is suggested that the urban poor constitute the largest problem for the schools: but the native peoples, urban or rural, and the Negroes are the most intractable problem. Seventeen recommendations concerning the alleviation of poverty are made, with particular emphasis on changes required in education. It is further recommended that resources for education be so distributed as to bring to disadvantaged children the special educational programs and facilities they need. Also stressed are parental involvement and special training of teachers. (Author/JW)

CANADIAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION

Brief on

POVERTY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CANADA

Presented to the

SPECIAL SENATE COMMITTEE ON POVERTY

June 2, 1970

320 Queen Street
Ottawa 4, Ontario

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BRIEF

This brief seeks to establish some workable definition of "the poor" in Canadian society and to indicate the subgroups within this general category with which public education is most concerned. Attempts are made to outline the potential of education for promoting the economic well-being of Canadians. It is concluded that education may, under certain circumstances, be a potent force in the eradication of poverty and should therefore receive even higher priority.

The brief then discusses the meaning of equality of educational opportunity and questions whether the children of the poor enjoy facilities and programs which are even as good as those enjoyed by the more affluent. It is concluded that the poor often get the poorer schools, programs and teachers, rather than the special and superior programs which they appear to require. These inequities tend to be compounded by regional inequalities in ability to finance education.

Throughout the brief particular emphasis is placed on the severe educational problems of the Indians, Eskimos, Metis and Negroes of Canada. While they often suffer the general problems associated with poverty, they have additional problems resulting from cultural differences. In general, it is suggested that the urban poor constitute the largest problem for the schools, but the native peoples, urban or rural, and the Negroes, the most intractable problem.

The Federation makes seventeen recommendations concerned with the alleviation of poverty in Canada, with particular emphasis on changes required in education. A guaranteed minimum income is recommended as an immediate necessity while longer-term remedies are being sought. It is pointed out that only the federal government is in a position to reduce regional inequalities in education by providing financial support to those areas where tax-paying ability is low. It is further recommended that resources for education be so distributed as to bring to disadvantaged children the special educational programs and facilities they need. In particular, renovation and/or replacement of substandard schools is recommended, along with the institution of kindergartens and preschool programs.

The brief also stresses the necessity of involving parents from low-income sectors of society both in the formal educational decision-making processes and in the local school itself. Also stressed is the necessity of promoting respect for the poor, particularly the native Canadians, through removing derogatory references in textbooks and substituting accurate information. Finally, some recommendations are made regarding the special training requirements of teachers of the poor.

C O N T E N T S

PREAMBLE

1. This brief is presented by the Canadian Teachers' Federation on behalf of its 13 member organizations, which represent some 200,000 teachers in the ten provinces and the territories.

2. The teachers of Canada have not suddenly discovered poverty, have not suddenly noticed that there are inequalities and discrimination in Canadian society and elsewhere. Virtually since its founding in 1920 the Canadian Teachers' Federation has devoted a large proportion of its resources to studying and attempting to reduce educational inequalities. In Canada, the Federation has repeatedly focussed attention on the glaring regional disparities that exist in educational opportunity and brought these to the notice of the federal government. Abroad, the Federation has provided a program, called Project Overseas, through which Canadian teachers offer summer in-service training courses for teachers in a number of African, Asian and Caribbean countries.

3. Since the relationship of poverty and public education is no new subject for teachers, about one-quarter of the Federation's recorded statements of policy are fairly directly related to aspects of poverty. These policy resolutions, broadly grouped, deal w .h (a) the basic rights of the individual student and teacher, (b) needed changes in the organization and financing of education if greater equality of opportunity is to be realized, (c) the distribution of

income and (d) special programs of education needed to assist groups suffering particularly serious problems of discrimination or disadvantage. The specific items of policy will be referred to throughout the course of this brief.

4. Statements of policy alone often lack the vitality and immediacy of daily life. To restore vigour to its policies on poverty, to check upon the continuing relevance of these policies, and to uncover possibilities for new or redefined policies, the Federation asked its member organizations to prepare a series of studies dealing with various aspects of the relationship between poverty and education. Eight such studies were done and have now been published under the title The Poor at School in Canada. The majority of these studies are "observational" rather than statistical. They are so arranged as to enable the reader to enter a selection of schools for the poor in Canada and contrast the facilities, teachers and educational programs to be found there with those offered to the affluent by the same educational jurisdictions. The studies have certain advantages in that they are both current and Canadian. Consequently, continuing reference will be made to them throughout this brief.

5. Copies of The Poor at School in Canada have been provided to accompany this brief. Additional documentation made available to the Senate Committee includes bibliographies dealing with disadvantaged children and dropouts and the most recent CTF study of Education Finance in Canada.

6. In summary, this brief will deal with various aspects of the relationship between poverty and public education in Canada. We recommend it to your special attention as the work of an organization which has demonstrated a long-standing concern for and commitment to the disadvantaged in Canada and the world.

THE DEFINITION OF POVERTY FOR TODAY'S SOCIETY

7. While in part it is the purpose of this brief to extend the definition of poverty in regard to the aspects affecting or affected by education, it is nevertheless necessary to begin with some working definition of poverty. In our view, the kind of poverty with which we must be most concerned, simply as members of a common society, is that which involves an involuntary and continuing economic status which is considerably lower than that enjoyed by the bulk of the population. The important ideas here are really quite simple. The poor lack money, they cannot choose between having or not having money, and their status is, by comparison with that of their fellow citizens, low.

8. It should also be noted that the poor are not defined simply as those with low incomes, but as those with incomes significantly lower than average. If this distinction is not made, it is not logically possible to talk about the eradication of poverty without also recommending the eradication of economic stratification. The overall question of stratification and social class is extremely complex and, in the final analysis, is a political question, which must receive a political answer.

9. Notwithstanding, it is clear that many persons, including teachers, are concerned with the special problems of those whose incomes are barely sufficient to provide the necessities of life, or in many cases, are insufficient. Daily, teachers of the poor see the effects on children of these low levels of income, in the child's lunch bag or in his clothes. In Martin's study of "Disparities in Urban Schools", for example, the teacher at Hillside, the poorer school, remarked "It is too bad the poor children have such home lives -- Did you see the lunches some of them bring to school? Bread and butter, that's all."[1] Another observer, in the city of "Agripolis", noted that the students at Trackville Junior High have "plain sandwich fare brought in paper bags. Most do not have fresh fruit included."[2] The observer in another school remarked upon the concern shown by teachers in Lo-Soc school: "One of the teachers commented that I should have gone to Mrs. A's class because one of her little girls had come to school that morning with no books and very thin-soled shoes. When the other teachers heard this they were very concerned and wanted to know if the child's parents knew that they could get boots at the Welfare."[3] Finally, in one of the case studies reported to CTF it was noted that children of the X family "are always clean and neatly dressed, although their clothing is obviously secondhand and the

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[1]Wilfred B. W. Martin. "Disparities in Urban Schools," in The Poor at School in Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1970). p. 6.

[2]John Milner. "Shadow Studies in Agripolis," in The Poor at School in Canada. p. 29.

[3]Poverty Committee, Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation. "Hi-Soc and Lo-Soc Elementary Schools," in The Poor at School in Canada. p. 133.

alterations not made in a very skilled manner.... They [the children] had recollections of feelings of inadequacy and humiliation and somehow felt that this related to their poor clothing."[4]

10. Teachers also experience at first hand the frustration occasioned by the apathy and lack of interest in school that many low income parents exhibit:

> The school keeps parents informed through regular formal report cards.... After a set of report cards has been sent home, a special opportunity is given for parents to visit the school and discuss their children's achievement with the teachers. Many parents, however, do not take advantage of this arrangement. Some have no contact at all with the schools.[5]
>
> After waiting an hour for a parent to come to the school to talk with her about one of the pupils, Miss Olsen observed disgustedly:
>
> > I was supposed to meet Mrs. Butt this afternoon and she didn't turn up. What can you do? She's not one bit interested in Henry's school work.[6]
>
> Many parents and grandparents of these children are of little or no help at all in urging the youngsters to remain in school. Indeed, Indians in general never force their opinions on others. If anything, they act as an obstacle to further education simply by not offering any encouragement.[7]

11. Can a child learn well if he is hungry, or cold, or ill-clad? Can he study well in a home that is crowded, noisy and provides

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[4]Committee on Poverty, The Manitoba Teachers' Society. "Case Studies of Two Families Living in Poverty," in The Poor at School in Canada. pp. 88, 90.

[5]K. E. Gilliss. "Two Rural Schools," in The Poor at School in Canada. p. 48.

[6]Martin, op. cit., p. 6.

[7]I. A. Lee. "The 'Citizens Minus' in Education," in The Poor at School in Canada. p. 120.

little encouragement? Let us say honestly that no educational program, however well-designed and forward-looking; no teacher, however sympathetic and competent, can compensate for these primary deprivations. Moreover, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that malnutrition, in particular, if it occurs at an early stage of the child's development, may cause irreversible damage.[8] And at any time it may be a source of learning disabilities:

> Those who have worked with undernourished or hungry children know that they exhibit behavioral alterations. These include apathy, lethargy, inability to pay attention, and perhaps, overconcern about food to such a degree that responses to classroom stimuli do not occur. A child in such condition no longer meets the expectations of his family or teachers. He begins to live in a world of his own and may seek recognition or gain attention by ways that disrupt learning experiences.[9]

12. In view of the evidence presented here, the Canadian Teachers' Federation recommends that some form of guaranteed annual income be established which would enable those presently defined as poor[10] to achieve the goals of adequate housing, clothing and nourishment. Since the economy fluctuates, it would probably be unwise to specify an exact amount. Similarly, we do not insist upon a particular means of distributing this income, since several alternatives might do equally well. However, we do feel that the recipients should not be humiliated or robbed of all dignity because they need this money and

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[8] Merrill S. Read. "Malnutrition and Learning," American Education. 5:11-14, December 1969.

[9] Ibid., p. 14.

[10] It is recognized that this definition may change as society itself changes.

that the method of distribution should act as an incentive to greater achievement at school and in the wider society. A guaranteed income would appear to be preferable to the family allowances, which seem to provide incentives of a less desirable sort.

13. Since the guaranteeing of income for the poor requires a redistribution of the total income of society, it may be noted in this connection that the Canadian Teachers' Federation has reported to the federal government's Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs its commitment to the principle that "the progressive character of income tax should be strengthened."[11]

14. In sum, then, the Canadian Teachers' Federation defines poverty as a problem which has its basis in economic insufficiency and argues that an immediate start must be made on the problem by ensuring that there is enough cash in the pockets of the poor to handle the basic necessities of life. This minimum must be attained if other social programs, including education, are to have their full effect.

15. On the other hand, unless it is desired that there should always be a large segment of Canadian society which cannot become self-supporting, longer-term solutions to poverty must also be sought. To achieve such solutions, attention must be given to the resources other than cash to which the poor need equal access -- housing, jobs, health and legal services, and education. What are the priorities among these

[11]Canadian Teachers' Federation. Brief on the White Paper on Tax Reform. Presented to Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, March 12, 1970. p. 2.

items and what are the priorities within each? Discussion of these questions follows in the next section.

EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

16. Education is at something of a disadvantage in asking for priority as a potential way of helping the poor, since its benefits are generally of a long-term nature. Education does not have the immediacy of, say, a new house. Yet there are two main bases on which education may claim considerable priority:

1. Education is a source of power for the individual
2. Longer periods of education have been shown to be correlated with higher incomes.

17. While the second of these has received the most attention, it may be that the first is of greatest relevance in alleviating the economic problems of the poor. Our reasons for suggesting this would be as follows: A man or woman who is broadly educated has non-financial resources which, nevertheless, may be of considerable monetary value. Those who are well-educated know where to find assistance, the services to which they are entitled, their rights and privileges as citizens. In brief, they know how to find the information they need and to use it to their advantage. And they have sufficient confidence to insist upon their rights. This kind of knowledge may be as relevant to ensuring equal access to various services for the poor as the actual provision of the services themselves.

18. This view takes on additional importance when one considers the implications of the correlation between high levels of formal education and high incomes. The basic problem is that the monetary value of a particular level of education is related to the general level of education achieved by the population. Thus there seems to be no minimum number of years of education which, if achieved by all, would ensure prosperity for all. That is to say, a degree is cheap if all have degrees. Thus estimates of the length of a minimum education are constantly being revised upwards.

19. This line of reasoning implies that if education is to help the poor to economic well-being, there must be qualitative as well as quantitative goals for education. It is not enough to say that everyone should have 12 or 14 or more years of education, or to run "stay in school" campaigns. This approach only holds time constant and lets achievement vary. But if the poor are to be helped, it is achievement that must be equalized, not time. Many educators now believe that it is possible to specify the general level of verbal and quantitative skills which must be attained before special training can be successfully undertaken. Moreover, they believe that virtually every individual can attain these minimum levels of skill and thus reach the threshold of economic self-sufficiency.[12] If all but the

[12]See, for example, Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelmann. Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966). 308 p.

Lee Collet, Program SIMEX: A Simulated Experience for Teaching and Testing Research Competencies. School of Education, University of Michigan. Paper presented to American Educational Research Association, January 1969. p. 2.

William Clark Trow. Teacher and Technology: New Designs for Learning. (New York: Appleton - Century - Crofts, 1963). 198 p.

D. Gene Watson. "Benjamin S. Bloom: 'Learning for Mastery'." Administrator's Notebook. Vol. 16, No. 8, April 1968.

severely handicapped can indeed be brought to a level of skill at which they can enter special training programs for the various occupations which are available in society, a real beginning on the eradication of poverty can be said to have been made.[13]

20. Education, then, can contribute to the eradication of poverty if efforts are devoted to enabling all, or virtually all, members of society to achieve a minimum level of general intellectual competence on which various sorts of special training for different but necessary and desirable occupations may be based.

21. This approach stresses the need for general intellectual attainment and thus provides a vantage point from which to criticize policies which do not appear to conform to this goal. There is a particular program of the federal government to which the Canadian Teachers' Federation wishes to direct attention in this regard. This is the program which provides substantial weekly allowances, under the Occupational Training of Adults Act, for adults attending vocational courses at technical institutes and elsewhere. We would suggest that the terms of this act are too narrow and that the length of training allowed is too short: "To take a person from illiteracy to job competence in two years is often impossible."[14] We would therefore recommend that the time limit be increased and that the benefits be extended to adults properly enrolled in programs designed to upgrade their standing in elementary and secondary subjects.

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[13]This assumes, of course, that there will continue to be enough jobs to go around, a point not necessarily conceded by proponents of education for leisure.

[14]John W. Chalmers. "Poverty and Alberta's Native Peoples," in The Poor at School in Canada, p. 138.

22. In summary, we as educators have faith in education and in its power to enhance the well-being of the individual. And we would suggest that both as a source of power and knowledge for individuals and as the basis for specialized occupational training programs, education has a high potential for providing the poor with the means to escape their poverty. If it is to achieve this potential, however, education needs to receive greater priority from all levels of government.

23. The next sections deal with the barriers in the way of achieving the goals set for education and, also, outline the particular groupings of the poor with which public education is most concerned.

POVERTY AS A PROBLEM FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

24. It has been suggested in the previous section that education is in many ways almost as good as money in the bank; it may therefore have some potential for relieving the poverty of even the elderly and the severely handicapped. Certainly, it has special potential for assisting the adult world in general. However, in so far as teachers in the publicly-supported educational systems in Canada are concerned the greatest potential for a long-term solution to poverty through education lies with the school-age children of the poor. They are both the numerically largest group in the poverty sector and the group most amenable to change. At the same time, children of this group present the schools with the most severe educational problems.

25. It is difficult to give any exact figures regarding the number of children at school who could be classified as poor, not only because, as has been pointed out by the Economic Council, the definition of poverty through reference to a specific level of income is arbitrary, but also because accurate statistics are lacking. As a consequence, one can only make rough estimates regarding the proportion of children at school who are from low-income families.

26. The Economic Council, in their Fifth Annual Review, estimated that in 1961 there were 916,000 nonfarm families, 150,000 farm families, and 416,000 individuals who had to spend more than 70 per cent of their income on food, shelter and clothing.[15] They estimated that the total number of people involved was 4.2 million (non-farm) and .5 million (farm). Assuming that the average family included four members and that 40 per cent of the low income population consisted of children 16 and under, one arrives at an approximate total of 1.9 million children 16 years and under from low income homes. Thus for 1961 one may estimate that approximately 27 per cent of the population 0-16 (6,812,179) was from a family in poverty. This figure employs the minimum estimate of low income. If the maximum estimate were used, the figure would rise to over one-third. Thus one might say that in 1961 about 30 per cent of the children attending school or approaching school age were from families with very low incomes.

[15] Economic Council of Canada. Fifth Annual Review: The Challenge of Growth and Change. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968). pp. 108-110.

27. More recent data from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics suggest that this proportion probably decreased between 1961 and 1967.[16] Using the same proportional relationships as for 1961 one arrives at a minimum estimate of 1.5 million children from poor families, representing about 24 per cent of the population aged 0-16. One might also speculate that the distribution of poor children throughout the school system has changed since 1961 and will change still further in the next decade. There is a well-established trend toward retaining a larger proportion of students through secondary school. Since most children of affluent parents were already being retained to the end of high school or beyond, an increase in retention must mean that a higher proportion of poorer children are now staying in school.[17] Thus while the overall proportion of poor children may have dropped, the proportion attending high school has probably increased. It would also be of interest to explore the extent to which birth rates continue to vary with income levels, since this is the sort of information one needs to have in order to predict the future size of the poverty problem for the schools. The latest study of enrolment[18] predicts a continuing drop in enrolment in the elementary schools over the next ten years. Will the proportion of the poor in this student population increase, decrease, or remain the same?

[16]Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Consumers Finance Research Staff. Income Distribution and Poverty in Canada 1967. Preliminary Estimates. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), pp. 11-12.

[17]For an international study of retention to secondary school see Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Social Objectives in Educational Planning. (Paris: OECD, 1967), 309 p.

[18]Z. E. Zsigmond and C. J. Wenaas. Enrolment in Educational Institutions by Province, 1951-52 to 1980-81. Staff Study No. 25, Economic Council of Canada. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 89.

28. These speculations merely reinforce problems raised by the Economic Council and other bodies regarding the lack of statistics on poverty and its correlates. We really don't know how many children at school come from poor families and therefore may present learning problems of particular kinds. Nor can we say definitely whether quantities are increasing or decreasing. Even at the local level, where one might expect such important data to be available, accurate information was often lacking:

> Considerable difficulty was met in obtaining some of the very basic socio-economic data for the two sectors of the city. This was a surprise, considering the prestige which most local educators accord the social science departments of the university. As the department head of Sociology of Education succinctly concluded, "This is an area that is completely unexplored in Agripolis."[19]
>
> Data regarding the socio-economic status of the two areas is not readily available. The most useful data source for this report was a study compiled in 1967 which identified twenty "local areas" within the city, and provided comparative socio-economic data for each. Unfortunately the most recent data available at that time were from the 1961 Census.[20]

29. Moreover, while we have defined the poor as those who lack money, we have carefully not defined the children of the poor as those who lack learning ability. Many children from low income homes do fairly well in school. However, the incidence of learning problems among the poor is undoubtedly higher. For example, the study undertaken in an urban area of British Columbia provides a table showing

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[19]Milner, op. cit., p. 24.

[20]Inner-City Schools Committee, British Columbia Teachers' Federation. "Equal Opportunity to Learn?" in The Poor at School in Canada. p. 96.

that achievement on standardized reading and arithmetic tests is consistently lower in Poverty Elementary School than it is in Affluent Elementary School.[21] A study conducted in another western Canadian city found similar results.[22] That the learning problems evidenced in the early years of school persist throughout is supported by the multitude of studies around the world which have shown a relationship between school retention and socio-economic status.[23]

30. The magnitude of the problem of poverty for the schools can, then, be said to equal the number of children attending school whose parents lack adequate income and who exhibit learning difficulties of various sorts.

31. Another approach to the question of the magnitude of the poverty problem in education might be through creation of a typology of poverty subgroups and the exploration of the particular types of school-related problems associated with membership in a particular subgroup. Table 1 is a first attempt at establishing such a typology.

32. The learning problems of children from the different groups described in Table 1 might vary considerably. For example, for immigrant children the major problem might be language difficulties, whereas for the Canadian-born child of underemployed parents transiency may be a more significant problem. One might also point out that the

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[21] Ibid., p. 100.

[22] Edmonton Public School Board. Report on the Inner-City Schools (unpublished study), October 1969.

[23] See references in School Dropouts. Bibliographies in Education No. 2. (Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1969). 17 p.

Table 1. Towards a Typology of Poverty Subgroups

Poverty Subgroup	Incidence Is Predominantly	
	Rural	Urban
Unemployed or underemployed parents		x
Parents living on marginal lands	x	
Widowed or separated mothers	x	x
Immigrant parents		x
Indians and Metis	x	x
Negroes		x
Eskimos	x	

problems vary in numerical incidence, in severity, and in persistence. For example, children who are of Indian, Metis or Eskimo extraction constitute a relatively small proportion of the low-income population. Yet a number of CTF's member organizations gave the problems of these children priority because of their severity. As well, the severity of the problems faced by immigrant children was noted; however, this problem was considered to be less serious since it was not viewed as persisting over an indefinite period of time. In general, it was the opinion of our Members that the educational problem presented by Canadian-born urban poor of European or British extraction was numerically largest, but that the educational problem presented by the native Canadian (Indian, Eskimo and Metis), rural or urban, and by Negroes, is most severe and least easily solved.

DEFINING EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

33. It has been pointed out in preceding sections that the learning problems of children from low-income families may be more severe and more persistent, and may affect a higher proportion of the total number in the group. These learning problems may differ among the various poverty subgroups, as they become entwined with problems arising from ethnic, racial and cultural differences. They may also be compounded by the addition of emotional problems:

> Ron was never observed in the gym without a ball under his left arm and ... no one ever attempted to take his "assurance ball"(?) from him.[24]

34. Many of these problems, it is now thought, arise out of the early family experiences of the child[25] and thus present education with the problem that children do not really start school on an equal footing with each other. If children are not equal to begin with, what kind of definition can one give to "equality of educational opportunity"? Clearly, it is not sufficient to provide only equal facilities for children who may vary so vastly in their readiness for formal learning. Special programs of many sorts are needed to counteract the school-related deprivations and disadvantages endured by the poor.

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[24]Milner, op. cit., p. 35.

[25]See, for example, Judith A. Palmer. Home Environment and Achievement (Toronto: Research Department, Board of Education, 1967). p. 29.

Dale E. Shuttleworth. The Effect of the Multiproblem Family On the Educational Process. OERC Distribution Report No. 1. (Toronto: Ontario Educational Research Council, 1967). 14 p.

35. The next sections of this brief will be devoted to discussions of equality of educational opportunity in Canada, with special attention to two questions, reflecting "minimum" and "maximum" definitions of that concept:

1. Do children of the poor get the same facilities and treatment at school?
2. Do children of the poor get better facilities and treatment at school?

These questions will be discussed under the following headings, which we would call themes in the relationship between poverty and education in Canada:

1. Regional Inequalities
2. School Facilities
3. Special Programs
4. Teachers of the Poor

REGIONAL INEQUALITIES

36. The problem of poverty in Canada is undoubtedly much compounded by the gross variations in productivity and income among different regions of Canada. Regardless of the intent of the people in these areas, or of their governmental representatives, their financial resources are simply not sufficient to match the facilities that can be provided in other parts of Canada. As was pointed out in the conclusion of one of the observational studies conducted for CTF in an eastern province, "Programs to accomplish the desired objectives, however, will be costly and will involve facilities, agencies and experts not currently

available in a province where all funds for education are strictly limited by the financial situation of the province itself."[26]

37. There is no need to belabour in this brief the extent to which these gross regional inequalities exist in Canada. Their effect on education is illustrated by the figures in Table 2, which compare the ten provinces on the bases of ability to pay (personal income per child aged 5-19) and expenditure per pupil.

Table 2. Ability to Finance Education and Per Pupil Expenditure in Canada, by Province, 1966

Province	Ability (Personal Income Per Child 5 to 19 Years of Age)		Expenditure (School Board Expenditure Per Pupil Enrolled)	
	Amount	Rank	Amount	Rank
Nfld.	$3,538	10	$202	10
P.E.I.	4,182	9	279	9
N.S.	5,017	7	306	7
N.B.	4,405	8	280	8
Que.	5,830	6	473	4
Ont.	8,256	2	504	3
Man.	6,825	5	413	6
Sask.	7,103	3	461	5
Alta.	7,031	4	527	1
B.C.	8,437	1	508	2
Canada	$6,910	---	$465	---

Source: W. J. Brown. Education Finance in Canada. (Ottawa: CTF, 1969), pp. 50, 69.

[26] Gilliss, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

38. The Canadian Teachers' Federation is of the firm belief that the federal government is the only agency in Canada with the power to bring about a redistribution of income which would enable the poorer provinces to bring their educational facilities up to at least the average standard which the wealthier provinces can afford. It therefore recommends that the federal government provide financial support for all levels of education (elementary, secondary and post-secondary) in regions of the country where there is a clear deficiency in tax-paying ability, relative to the rest of the country.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

39. As was pointed out in the preceding section, the part of Canada one lives in makes a difference to one's educational opportunities. The child in British Columbia has more than twice as much spent on his education each year as the child in Newfoundland. And this difference is closely correlated with retention in school: in 1961 68 per cent of the 15-19 year olds in British Columbia were still in school, compared with 52 per cent in Newfoundland.[27]

40. But we have been aware of this situation for a long time. What has not been so evident is that in the same province, in the same city, and under the same operating authority, it is frequently the poor who get poorer schools. Once again, we are short on the needed statistics, and must turn for evidence to the observational studies which were conducted on our behalf:

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[27] W. J. Brown. Education Finance in Canada. (Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1969). p. 64.

> Because of the limited size of the school playground [at Hillside] ... the majority of the children are forced to play on the streets and sidewalks during the recess and lunch breaks. Higher Levels is a modern school .... Ample playground space is available .... The Hillside pupils are continuously interrupted by the traffic on the streets.[28]
>
> Trackville Junior High is a red-brick two-storey building located about 35 feet from a main truck artery ... the play area is undeveloped..... Both upper and lower corridors are dimly lighted.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Across the street from a shady park is a single-storey school that was built in 1951 [Middletown] .... In the summer the front lawn is attractively green and flowers border the walkway to the main entrance on the west .... In the winter ... most of the activity centers on the skating rink and jam pail curling .... On entering the building ... the visitor is greeted by colourful papier-maché and ceramic samples of handwork displayed from glassed-in cases.[29]
>
> The two schools ... are both in relatively older areas of the city, and are thus traditional-style structures. The school located in the higher socio-economic region of the city has a park-like setting among lawns and trees, and is surrounded by a prestigious residential district ....
>
> The contrasting school is located directly on one of the main traffic arteries of the city, and is in a setting of old homes -- many in poor repair -- and heavy industry ....
>
> Not only does Affluent Elementary have pleasanter surroundings, but it also has a greater site size. Its 461 students are accommodated on a site of 4.83 acres .... While this is not large compared to most standards, it exceeds the 2.18 acres ... provided for the 504 children at Poverty Elementary School.[30]

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[28]Martin, op. cit., p. 3.
[29]Milner, op. cit., pp. 28-29, 38-39.
[30]Inner-City Schools Committee, BCTF., op. cit., pp. 93-94.

41. Similar results were found in an earlier study in a western Canadian city:

> ... Inner City school libraries are converted classrooms or even smaller areas .... The Inner City school sites are dwarfed by comparison with the established standards for new schools .... The very poor gymnasiums and changing facilities in the Inner City schools ... cripple the Physical Education program.[31]

42. It is apparent from these studies that many of the schools in Canada are community schools in the worst sense of that concept. The children of the poor may have few if any books at home -- so why not omit libraries from their schools? They regularly play in the streets at home -- so why make the school's playground significantly bigger or better? Surroundings at home may be drab and dreary and run-down -- a depressing run-down school should fit in perfectly. Better to concentrate resources in the affluent areas, where the parents might otherwise complain.

43. It will no doubt be pointed out that the disparities in facilities are accidental rather than intentional. While Canadian school systems were going through a period of rapid expansion in the nineteen-fifties and early sixties, funds were not available for replacing or renovating older schools. Moreover, it is as a result of certain trends in urban development that the poor have fallen heir to the older, less adequate schools. And finally, variable zoning requirements contribute to the perpetuation of small school grounds in the inner city by raising property values to commercial rates.

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[31] Edmonton Public School Board, op. cit., p. 6.

44. It will no doubt also be argued that replacement of inadequate facilities has begun. On the other hand, the process is hardly proceeding with undue haste. As one study points out:

> Many of the Inner City schools have not been renovated or redecorated, nor are they presently planned to be .... The holding off of such corrective work for even as little as six years means condemning a substantial number of the children ... to taking their entire elementary schooling in that very condition of inequality of educational opportunity.[32]

45. The Canadian Teachers' Federation therefore urges local and provincial governments to recognize the urgency of the need for renovation or replacement of substandard schools and to proceed with the necessary building programs immediately. It is also suggested that the designs for any new schools which are to serve the poor incorporate such features as libraries, imaginative playgrounds, at-school study areas and works of art, thus providing a beautiful and stimulating environment for children whose home environment lacks those characteristics. Furthermore, it is suggested that the buildings be designed to encourage parental involvement in the school and its program and to permit use of some part of the facilities for emphasizing the positive values in the cultural identity of the particular community. (For example, there might be an area set aside for displays relating to the ethnic background of the children.)

46. It is further suggested that some experimentation be conducted with the idea of a "school without a building." One of the major problems in educating children of the poor is that they do not stay put:

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[32] Ibid., p. 7.

> ... children move in and out of Poverty Elementary more frequently .... From September 1, 1969 to January 31, 1970, 134 students transferred into Poverty School ... [and] 101 students transferred out .... Many of those transferring out were the same children who had transferred in earlier in the same school year.[33]

But as John Macdonald has pointed out in The Discernible Teacher, there is no reason why the school must be a slave to the great God of Proximity.[34] Where the transiency occurs within a city, as much of it does, some attempt might be made to gain greater continuity of program for the transient children by making certain that they attend the same school throughout their early years, perhaps by providing transportation facilities. Where distances are too great, special resource teachers might be assigned to move about with the children, easing their transfer from one school situation to another.

47. In summary, then, it seems clear that school facilities do not at present meet even the minimum definition of equality of educational opportunity (i.e., equal facilities). Yet it is to be hoped that efforts will be made in the near future to bring them closer to the maximum definition (i.e., special facilities to meet greater needs).

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[33] Inner-City Schools Committee, BCTF., op. cit., p. 98.
See also Christian A. Stuhr and E. N. Wright, "Marks and Patterns of Parental Mobility in a Downtown School." Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 16:47-55, March 1970.

[34] John Macdonald. The Discernible Teacher. (Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1970), p. 44.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN OF THE POOR

48. Buildings alone will not solve the educational problems of children from low income families, although they can provide the spaces in which appropriate programs may take place. The question of what constitutes an appropriate program is, of course, not settled. In fact, in view of the feeling which now pervades educational thinking -- that there is a need to adjust continually for individual differences -- there is probably no way of ever settling the question. That is to say, there is no one program, or set of programs, which would immediately do away with the learning problems of the poor.

49. The mistaken assumption that a particular program might demolish the educational problems of poor children at one fell swoop may lie behind the failures of so many of the compensatory programs in the United States:

> A study conducted for the U.S. Office of Education of all compensatory programs for the disadvantaged reported on between 1963 and 1968 found that of the 1,000 programs examined, only 23 were found to have yielded "measured educational benefits of cognitive achievement."[35]

Head Start programs, in particular, have been widely criticized.

50. Yet, while it seems to be true that the hastily implemented programs of preschool compensatory education in the United States have not been overly successful, one should not therefore discard entirely

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[35]Frank Riessman and Alan Gartner. "Paraprofessionals: the Effect on Children's Learning." The Urban Review, 3:21-22, October 1969 (p. 21).

the idea of preschool education, for it remains certain that many of the learning problems of poor children have their roots in the experiences which they have had, or lacked, in their earliest years. These problems ought, in logic at least, to be amenable to solution through improved kindergarten and preschool education. Certainly, as may be seen from Table 3, there is a general lack of such facilities in many parts of Canada. Moreover, in a number of provinces the provincial grant scheme does not cover kindergarten facilities. As a result, local districts tend to establish kindergartens on the basis of demand (which usually comes from the more affluent families) rather than of need.[36] It is therefore the feeling within the Canadian Teachers' Federation that greater provision should be made for the establishment of kindergarten and preschool programs in Canada and that, in allocating resources for these facilities, priority be given to communities in which the greater proportions of children from low income sectors of society live. The highest priority of all should go to children who suffer the additional disadvantage of belonging to an ethnic, cultural or racial minority in which the language of the home is not the language of the school.

51. The solution to the educational problems of the poor does not lie exclusively in the preschool, nor can it be found in any particular level of the educational system. It seems, rather, that solutions may be found as the programs in the schools take on dimensions such as the following:

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[36]Research Department, Board of Education for the City of Toronto. Study of Achievement: Junior Kindergarten, Who Is Served and Who Goes. (Toronto: the Board, 1965). p. 15.

(a) parental involvement

(b) culturally differentiated textbooks and curricula

(c) avoidance of streaming

(d) intensive trainin , in language skills.

Table 3. Kindergarten Enrolment As a Proportion of the Relevant Age Group, by Province, 1967-68

Province	Proportion of 5-year-olds Enrolled, 1967-68
Nfld.	71.3%
P.E.I.	1.7
N.S.	104.1
N.B.	0.7
Quebec	62.9
Ont.	91.4
Man.	52.1
Sask.	19.5
Alta.	2.2
B.C.	42.4
Yukon and N.W.T.	57.1

Source: Z. E. Zsigmond and C. J. Wenaas. Enrolment in Educational Institutions by Province 1951-52 to 1980-81. Economic Council of Canada Staff Study No. 25. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970. Appendix A, pp. 87-158.

Parental Involvement

52. Parental involvement in the school is very likely to be one of the keys to pupil achievement. A number of studies have demonstrated that achievement may improve swiftly when the school takes the trouble to show parents how to reinforce achieving behaviour:

> A New York City program, STAR (Supplementary Teaching Assistance in Reading), used para-professionals to train parents to read to their children .... The children, whose parents were trained one hour per week during the school year to read to them, scored higher in nine different reading tests than did a control group of matched children who received two hours of remediation per week from professionals.[37]

53. The studies done for CTF suggest that the schools in poorer areas seem to have little contact with the parents (see paragraph 10). Yet contact might be brought about fairly simply, and in a way which could directly improve children's achievement. For example, in a recent paper to the American Educational Research Association, Dr. Robert Hawkins described a system through which parents deliberately reinforced their children's achievement by giving or withholding rewards on the basis of notes received daily from the teacher. Achievement gains in skill subjects were frequently astonishing under this system.[38]

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[37]Riessman and Gartner, op. cit., p. 22.

[38]Robert P. Hawkins and David J. Sluyter. Modification of Achievement by a Simple Technique Involving Parent and Teacher. Kalamazoo Valley Intermediate School District and Western Michigan University. Paper presented to annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, Minneapolis, March 2-6, 1970.

54. In the various programs being developed to assist disadvantaged children in Canada, involvement of parents is usually a key feature:

> Drop into St. Paul's School in downtown Toronto on Monday or Thursday evenings .... Parents are teaching other students how to paint.[39]

> Three groups of volunteers work with children who have special problems.... The National Council of Jewish Women conduct classes for preschool children two mornings a week. On these mornings the mothers attend and are given help with problems that affect their children.[40]

> The nursery school has two Cree-speaking children for every English-speaking child. Many Indian mothers stay to learn sewing and other activities while their children attend nursery school.[41]

55. While parental involvement at the level of the local school is essential, some thought might be given to the extent to which low-income parents are involved in the formal bodies which make decisions about educational priorities, such as boards of education. Parents of the poor stand little chance of gaining access to these decision-making bodies if a property qualification must be met. But even where this is not the case, potential candidates from the lower income group may find the cost of running for elected office prohibitive. These questions, again, are not open to ready solution. Presumably, however,

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[39]Monica Young. "One Inner-City School Keeps Open House Two Nights a Week." Curriculum Bulletin (Ontario) 1:21, January 1969.

[40]P. H. Seymour. "Ottawa's McNabb Park Community School." Curriculum Bulletin (Ontario) 1:11, January 1969.

[41]John Gillies. "Equal Education Takes a Three-Pillared Stride Towards Reality in Moosonee." New Dimensions in Education, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1969, p. 11.

some means must be found whereby the representatives of the poor may have both formal and operational participation in the decisions which affect the educational opportunities provided for their children.

56. While true for all low-income groups, this point is particularly true in the case of ethnic and racial minorities. The situation of Indian parents in Canada is a case in point. It seems that originally the Indian communities had a voice in the operation of the federal schools for Indians through school committees. Where the responsibility for educating Indian children has been transferred to provincial public schools, however, this direct liaison between home and school has often been lost, and replaced by the indirect mediation of a representative of the Indian Affairs Branch:

> ... band councils still need to deal with the IAB to implement programs .... In most Indian communities, also, few Indians, if any, are on local school boards where decisions affect their children.[42]

57. The effect of this exclusion from the decision-making process is to increase the alienation of Indian parents from the schools and to hold back the development of schools which would truly serve the needs and interests of the local community. In turn, this tends to keep native communities socially marginal:

> Most Indians, particularly in the north, are unaccepted by white people socially.[43]
>
> Some parents resent their children learning the worse parts of the white man's ways ....[44]

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[42] Lee, op. cit., p. 118.
[43] Ibid., p. 117.
[44] Ibid., p. 120.

In view of these problems, the Canadian Teachers' Federation strongly recommends that further provision be made for the involvement of Indians, Metis, Eskimos and Negroes in those policy-making bodies which determine the education of their children.

Differentiated Curricula and Textbooks

58. The failure to date of education to help adequately children of the poor can be traced not only to unequal facilities and lack of parental involvement, but also to the very nature of the programs which have been offered; while these programs have undoubtedly been prepared in good faith, they may nevertheless be quite inappropriate for many, perhaps most, poor children. The child who is poor will not, for example, likely recognize the kind of "normal" home life which is portrayed in many reading texts, where children have plenty to eat, good clothes, rooms of their own, pets, grass to play on, and a father who comes home from work every night. The stereotyped portrayals in these books take for granted certain values which, even where they are held by the disadvantaged sector, cannot be achieved. Take, for example, the supposedly simple matter of cleanliness. It's really very easy to be clean -- or is it? Consider the following excerpt from a CTF study:

> Not too many mothers of six or seven children living on welfare could manage, especially in the winter time, to wash the children's clothes too often, even if they have seconds to change into. Many Indian homes, particularly those of the squatters, are extremely substandard, and water is not an easily accessible commodity. The load of washing must be scrubbed laboriously by hand on a washboard, perhaps in the same tub of sudsy water, then rinsed in a small basin of hot water. Even when thus washed the clothes

> fail to look sparkling clean, not to mention the holes or patches or the fitting or styling of the clothing on the backs of some of the Indian children, who must attend school with comparatively well-dressed and well-fed non-Indians.[45]

59. A more serious deficiency in the curricula and textbooks of the dominant sector of society is that they may portray the other sectors in a distorted or erroneous way:

> Research done by the University Women's Club of Port Credit (1968) on the Canadian Indian in Ontario's school texts showed that there are "enormous omissions" .... The little information given about Indians is chiefly on economy and technology, and includes "almost no material on religion, values, ethics or aesthetics."[46]

One result of these influences may be that the children whom the schools are intent upon helping develop such a feeling of inferiority that communication between teacher and children virtually disappears:

> Walter, Shirley, Dorothy and Betty-Anne ... liked the school and remembered it as a pleasant place....
> ... They all felt they were "dumb" in comparison to other children. This concept persists and they feel they have done quite well in life considering they are a "dumb" family.[47]

It might be noted that both Shirley and Dorothy qualified for senior high school programs, but did not attend.

60. Another unfortunate result of the standard textbooks is that children in the dominant society also receive a distorted version

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[45] Ibid., p. 119.
[46] Ibid., p. 109.
[47] Committee on Poverty, Manitoba Teachers' Society, op. cit., p.90.

of the nature and achievements of other groups in Canada. "Our teachers and other 'educated' citizens who have been raised on these same or similar textbooks could hardly be condemned for their share in the treatment of the Indian people as 'citizens minus.'"[48]

61. There is an obvious need for differentiated curricula and texts -- but a dilemma is created by the fact that it is not economical to produce texts in small numbers. However, it should at least be possible in the short term to remove discriminatory sections from present texts and begin to add in sections appropriate for children from other than urban middle income groups. The long-range solution may lie in doing away with general purpose textbooks and replacing them with a multitude of reference books and one-unit books. The library thus replaces the textbook and leaves teachers free to organize material and adapt it to the special needs of their pupils. The library may also become a resource centre which allows teachers and pupils to develop new materials as needed and, in effect, to write their own textbooks.

62. The federal government could provide valuable assistance in the meantime by helping various ethnic and cultural minorities in Canada to locate and record their lost history and thus begin the restoration of their cultural identity. Provided it has the will, the government has many means of accomplishing these aims, including the Canada Council and the National Film Board. In developing the suggested materials it should be kept in mind that there are two major

[48]Lee, op. cit., p. 109.

goals: (1) to help Indians, Eskimos, Metis, Negroes and the poor generally to learn about and respect themselves and (2) to help other children to learn about and respect all their fellow citizens, including those whose heritage and style of life is different. If discrimination in Canadian society, whether conscious or unconscious, could be ended, a major step would have been taken towards the elimination of poverty.

Avoidance of Streaming

63. It has been pointed out in preceding sections that children do not start school equal. What is worse, however, is that the spread in ability grows ever wider as they move through school:

> Discussions with teachers in both schools lead one to believe that the differences in educational achievement between poor and more affluent children become more pronounced as the children become older ...[49]

> This initial spread in abilities increases over the years so that it is approximately double this amount by the time children approach the end of the elementary school.[50]

If the effect of schooling is to increase the degree of inequality, it certainly becomes a matter of interest to question why this should be so.

64. It is increasingly being suggested by educational authorities that one of the causes of this increase in the range of achievement is the practice of streaming, or grouping, on the basis of general or

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[49]Gilliss, op. cit., p. 86.

[50]John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson. The Nongraded Elementary School. Revised edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963. p. 27.

special ability. Some of this problem may be traced to the over-dependence on the I.Q. test which was to be found until recently in most schools. It was mistakenly thought that I.Q. tests recorded inherited mental ability, rather than the amount and type of learning which took place after birth[51] and that I.Q. results were absolute rather than relative. I.Q. test results were therefore treated as predictors of achievement and children were streamed on the basis of this prediction. The result was to give rise to the phenomenon which is often called the "self-fulfilling prophecy," through which the constantly falling expectations of the teacher are inevitably reflected in the constantly falling achievement level of the pupil. In this kind of system, pupils from homes of low socio-economic status, who often have low I.Q. scores, get started in a slow stream and rarely escape:

> The comparison of the Inner City-suburban samples showed that there was a disproportionately high percentage of Inner City pupils in the 7-year "slow learner" stream of the elementary Continuous Progress Plan and a disproportionately low percentage of Inner City students in the 5-year C.P. program. In fact, there were 25 times as many Inner City pupils as there were suburban pupils in the 7-year program for "slow learners." On the other hand, two of the Inner City schools sampled had no students at all in the beginning year of the 5-year "accelerated" stream.[52]

65. Streaming and grouping, it might be noted, seem on the surface to be eminently practical solutions to the problem of dealing

[51] For a recent discussion of heredity vs. environment see "Education, Ethnicity, Genetics and Intelligence," IRCD Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 4, Fall 1969.

[52] Edmonton Public School Board, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

with individual differences through group instruction. If students of roughly comparable ability are grouped together, it is thought, the teachers' problems will be much reduced. And if the groupings are by subject as well, the problems will be reduced that much further. But there are invidious side effects to these groupings. For one thing, children in the lower ability groups and streams, even if they are referred to as "Monkeys" or "Moon Walkers", are usually very well aware of their academic merits, or lack of them, and realize their stupidity. Moreover, groupings tend to obscure the logic of the problem, which is stated thus by Bereiter and Engelmann:

> If the point is accepted that disadvantaged children are behind other children in certain developmental aspects, then it follows by simple logical necessity that they must progress at a faster than normal rate if they are to catch up. Although this conclusion is not a popular one, there is no conceivable way to contradict it except by denying that disadvantaged children are behind.[53]

This problem of unequal beginning abilities and increasing inequalities does not get solved when graded schools are exchanged for nongraded schools, although the public stigma of failure is removed. There is little evidence to show that nongrading procedures bring about impressive improvements in skill subjects. It would appear that a further reorganization and reorientation of elementary education is required if the massive gains in the achievement levels of disadvantaged children which seem to be needed are to be made.

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[53]Bereiter and Engelmann, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

Emphasis on Language Skills

66. The final dimension of potentially effective programs for the disadvantaged is implied in the last section. This is the necessary emphasis on language skills. There is really no place in Canadian society today for those who do not possess a high degree of verbal skill. At least, there is no place among the occupations which are most desirable and which pay best. Physical skill can rarely be substituted. Thus if education is to make inroads in the problems of poverty there must be an even greater concentration on the teaching of language skills than there is at present. And here we may echo the recent words of the U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen Jr.:

> Imagine, if you can, what life would be like if you could not read, or if your reading skills were so meager as to limit you to the simplest of writings, and if for you the door to the whole world of knowledge and the inspiration available through the printed word had never opened.
>
> For more than a quarter of our population this is true .... These individuals have been denied a right -- a right as fundamental as the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness -- the right to read.[54]

67. It may be noted that in the CTF studies considerable emphasis is given in most of the classrooms to reading and arithmetic skills:

> ... although a formal timetable listing specific subjects and periods is displayed prominently in the classroom, Miss Brown has increased the time spent on mathematics, language and reading and has decreased the time spent on other activities.[55]

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[54]"Target for the 70's: the Right to Read." American Education 5:2-4, December 1969. (p. 2)

[55]Gilliss, op. cit., p. 57.

But more is obviously needed than time:

> Germaine has a serious reading problem and Miss Brown attempts to help her in the traditional way, which does not appear to remedy the situation.[56]

And that "more" will require much larger expenditures on developing new learning materials and on providing additional teachers with the specialized training to offer intensive initial and remedial programs in skill subjects. Where the children to be taught do not speak, as their first language, one of Canada's "official" languages, the teacher's special training should include a knowledge of that first language, whether it is Cree or Italian, and a knowledge of how to teach English or French as a second language.

Current Programs

68. The bleak portrait of the programs of education offered to disadvantaged children in Canada that was drawn above does not hold true everywhere. Many teachers have become concerned over just these problems in the past few years and have begun to move toward a solution. New programs have been designed and implemented in many parts of Canada. Inner city schools such as Duke of York Public School in Toronto have become well known for their innovative approaches to teaching poor children.[57] The E.N.O.C. program in Hamilton[58] and a

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[56] Ibid., p. 58.

[57] Douglas W. Balmer. "Duke of York Public School: A Pilot Project for Inner-City Schools." Curriculum Bulletin (Ontario) 1:22-24, January 1969.

[58] Mearl L. Thomson. "E.N.O.C. Is Beginning to Show Results." Curriculum Bulletin (Ontario) 1:3-5, January 1969.

higher horizons program in Winnipeg have been developed through co-operative efforts on the part of teachers and principals to deal with emerging problems. Similar programs are to be found in the Atlantic provinces and in the west of Canada. For example, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Inner-City Schools Committee is planning a summer program to meet various special needs of urban children from low-income areas.[59] It may be noted that many of these programs exhibit similar features -- reduced class size, specialists in language teaching, community and parental involvement, nutritious meals and snacks, field trips, male "identity" figures, use of volunteers, paraprofessionals and social workers, provisions for adult education and day care. These programs are all very worthy. But they are only a drop in the bucket compared with what is needed.

TEACHERS OF THE POOR

69. The final theme to be found in the relationship between poverty and education is the one with which we, as a federation of teachers, are most intimately concerned. This theme concerns the professional preparation and practice of the teachers of the poor. And if we accept as a rough estimate that perhaps a third of the children in the public schools come from homes of one or another of the poverty subgroups identified in an earlier section, it will be agreed that the proportion of teachers in this category is rather large.

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[59] British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Developmental Action Project: Vancouver Inner-City Schools. Vancouver: the Federation, 1970.

70. A number of problems arise when attempts are made to ensure that good teaching reaches the poor. Many of these problems may stem from the fact that teachers too are human beings, as anxious as any of their fellows for congenial surroundings and satisfying work. As a result, there has been a distinct reluctance on the part of teachers generally to seek or stay in schools in isolated areas or in schools where the children do not respond quickly to the usual teaching methods. This problem was compounded in the past through somewhat dishonest recruitment procedures which did not provide teachers with an honest picture of the situation they were likely to encounter.

71. The comparative studies undertaken for CTF and elsewhere illustrate this reluctance of teachers to remain as teachers of the poor:

> The teacher population, [at Glengarry Elementary] all female, is far from stable. In fact, the principal says that it is difficult to get teachers to remain in the school.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Nearly all the teachers in the area [at Rosedale Elementary] have taught here for many years.[60]

> The teaching staffs were also compared for length of service in their present schools. The median length of service at Affluent Elementary was 3.0 years, compared to 1.0 years at Poverty Elementary.[61]

> The turn-over rate of teachers is high; in certain instances there may be as many as two or

[60] Gilliss, op. cit., pp. 49, 69.
[61] Inner-City Schools Committee, B.C.T.F., op. cit., p. 102.

> three different teachers within the same academic year.[62]
>
> Don't tell me you are still at _____!
> Good heavens, why don't you transfer to a better area?
> I've heard about that school: I don't see how you can stand it.
> Why do you stay?[63]

72. A concomitant problem is that the teachers in the poorer schools often have less training:

> Employed in Trackville Junior High School are eight men and five women. Six have degrees and five are working toward their degrees in evening classes. No one has a major in special education.
> . . . . . .
> [At Middletown Junior High] the full staff complement is fifteen. Twelve have degrees and seven have two or more degrees.[64]
>
> Of the present teaching force at Affluent Elementary ... 56 per cent have ... at least four years' university training, compared to ... 42 per cent at Poverty Elementary.[65]

Presumably, one of the reasons for this disparity is that the better qualified teachers find it easier to get the kinds of positions they prefer.

73. A more subtle problem exists in the fact that teachers in schools for the poor do not usually live in the same area as their students. Thus they tend to look upon the adult community that surrounds the school from the point of view of outsiders, seeing the parents as shiftless, apathetic, lacking interest and responsibility and, in general, inferior:

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[62] Lee, op. cit., p. 117.
[63] Ingrid Ravatn. "Why Teach in the Slums?" Manitoba Teacher 46:3-6, Jan.-Feb., 1968. (p.3)
[64] Milner, op. cit., pp. 30, 40.
[65] Martin, op. cit., p. 6.

> Most of the teachers at Hillside have a different feeling about the area which the school serves than they do about the children in the area. None of the teachers live in it, and for the most part, they speak of it disparagingly.[66]

> Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled in response to a full-blown crisis. Under these circumstances teachers meet a few parents. Only one staff member visited the homes of his students.[67]

The isolation of the school from the community which thus develops does not augur well for the improvements in schooling that are needed. Teachers who are out of touch with or hostile to the community from which their pupils come may not develop that particular sensitivity which is required in difficult situations. For example, they may not recognize the subtleties involved in such overt behaviours as stealing or fighting. And they may adopt disciplinary modes which reflect this imperfect understanding.

> The philosophy behind the treatment of misbehaviour and consequently the method of punishment used by each principal is different. The principal at Hillside usually carries a strap in his pocket and he often uses it on misbehaving pupils .... For example, Harrison and Larry got "strapped" for fighting in the basement of the school, and Keith received a strapping for talking across the classroom while the principal was teaching a science lesson....
>
> The principal at Higher Levels has a different attitude toward the pupils who behave improperly, and consequently he has a different method of dealing with them. The strap has never been used at Higher Levels.[68]

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[66]Martin, op. cit., p. 6.
[67]Milner, op. cit., p. 30.
[68]Martin, op. cit., p. 8.

74. One might well ask how the very natural distaste which teachers have for difficult environments might be overcome. It is possible that financial incentives might be the answer in some cases. However, it seems that other approaches may be more fruitful. For example, the temporary or rotating appointment suggested in one study might be an acceptable solution in some cases:

> Alex Sim, for instance, recommended for the nomadic Indians a corresponding educational service complete with momadic teachers; while R. W. Dunning ... suggested a teacher-rotation system which was actually tested in British Columbia some years ago and proved successful although many obstacles such as the problem of seniority or the voluntary mobility of teachers had to be overcome.[69]

Another solution, although less clear in its ramifications, is the possibility of training persons from the community as teachers and teachers' aides. This is a debatable solution, since it might limit the individual to employment in a specific region, thus restricting his chances of mingling with the broader society. Thus, for example, it sounds sensible to suggest training Indians to teach in Indian communities; but it would be unfair to insist that they teach nowhere else.

75. In all probability, the most lasting solution to the problem of attracting competent teachers to schools for the poor may be sought in terms of the following:

(a) improved working conditions
(b) emphasis on aspects which present a challenge and require imaginative solutions

[69] Lee, op. cit., p. 111.

(c) specialized training.

Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

Working Conditions

76. Teachers agree that working with children who are disadvantaged is physically and emotionally exhausting. It is interesting to notice that in the projects specifically planned to help disadvantaged children that were described in paragraph 68, the two first steps taken almost everywhere were to reduce class size and hire specialists, including not only librarians and language specialists, but also persons in new and imaginative positions such as the "crisis" teacher described in one of the CTF studies:

> Mr. Y is a "crisis" or "resource" teacher. He takes care of youngsters who, for some reason or other, cannot function in a classroom situation for very long. The children, mostly boys, are sent down to him at regular intervals or at a crisis moment. Mr. Y talks to them or just lets them play until it is decided that they should return to class.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> When Donnie decided to leave there he started off down to Mr. Y's room again. (It was always an alternative if we couldn't go somewhere else.)[70]

Other personnel that have been brought into experimental programs include social workers and psychologists.

77. It would seem from the studies conducted for CTF that the question of class size is crucial. The pupils in a number of classes seemed to spend a considerable time just waiting, for events to start happening or for the teacher's attention:

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[70]Poverty Committee, P.E.I.T.F., op. cit., p. 132.

> The pupils who got books asked the teacher's permission to do this by raising their hands and waiting for her to ask them what they wanted. Four or five whispered across the classroom. The teacher spoke to those who were whispering. She said, "Stop talking and finish your maths. If you're finished there must be something you can do."[71]
>
> Ron begins tapping his feet on the wall in front of him. He picks up chalk and begins doodling on the board .... Teacher then moves to Ron's desk and begins helping him with a problem. He poses penetrating questions. Ron answers the questions easily. Ron intermittently lifts his head to daydream in the direction of the student at the board. Begins making faces at a student across the room.[72]

It might be noted that Ron is the boy whose "cumulative folder is monotonously repetitive with D's and C's."[73] Pupils were also discouraged at times from continuing on in their work, even when able and eager to do so:

> Eddie, one of the children working math, asks Miss Brown if he has to work beyond page 85. When she tells him that he does not, he closes his text, puts it in his desk and asks Miss Brown if he may get a book. "Sit still for a minute, please," she responds. He then lies across his desk and smiles at Tony, who is still working.[74]

An interesting contrast is found at the Higher Levels school described in another study, where the teacher has, in effect, reduced class size by turning her students into teachers:

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[71]Martin, op. cit., p. 13.
[72]Milner, op. cit., p. 34.
[73]Ibid., p. 31.
[74]Gilliss, op. cit., p. 56.

> One big difference was that at Higher Levels the teacher often encouraged specific students who were finished to help others who were having difficulty with their work.[75]

78. Improvements in working conditions of the kind suggested above might help to make teaching in schools for the poor sufficiently pleasant to attract highly qualified teachers. These improvements, of course, are not inexpensive.

Career Commitment

79. It is also noticeable that the special projects allow teachers who do not wish to participate to move to another school. This is an important aspect of improving the teaching of the poor. Schools for the poor should not be staffed by persons who are trying to transfer out, or who have been attracted only by special working conditions or extra money. Rather, it is to be hoped that in future these schools will be staffed by teachers who have committed themselves to a career in this area and who approach the community and the children with neither scorn nor sentimentality, but with genuine respect. As one study points out, "there is some indication that an increasing number of teachers are planning for themselves a career in 'inner-city' schools."[76]

80. An added incentive to making the teaching of the poor attractive to career teachers is the opportunity and need for innovative approaches. It is suggested that teachers be made aware of the

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[75]Martin, op. cit., p. 13.
[76]Inner-City Schools Committee, B.C.T.F., op. cit., p. 102.

challenging aspects of "difficult" teaching situations and be assured that the new techniques and approaches they develop will be as welcome there as in the schools for the affluent.

Special Training

81. One fairly certain way of bringing about career commitment is through providing teachers with a broad understanding of the learning problems of the poor, of the underlying social and economic conditions, and of the special techniques which may be used or are particularly required in such situations. The provision of this knowledge is in part the responsibility of in-service training facilities. However, in view of the size of the problem, one questions whether special training programs for teachers of the poor should not be incorporated within the regular preservice teacher preparation programs. A recent survey by the Canadian Teachers' Federation suggests that it is the exception rather than the rule to include courses, or even parts of courses, dealing with disadvantaged children in the regular training programs. Out of some 33 English-speaking teacher education institutions replying to the CTF questionnaire, 20 reported that no courses or parts of courses on Indian and Metis education are planned at present. Nineteen report the same situation in regard to the education of inner city children and 23 in regard to Eskimo education. In addition, 18 institutions reported that they do not provide any courses in preschool education.[77]

[77]Canadian Teachers' Federation. Questionnaire on Innovations in Teacher Education. Preliminary results, 1970.

82. As in other cases throughout this brief, the Federation recognizes the particular urgency of the problem as it relates to the native peoples of Canada; it therefore strongly recommends that courses of study be established which will better prepare teachers of Indian, Metis and Eskimo students to deal with the needs of these students. Moreover, it is suggested that this is an area in which the federal government, perhaps through the Canada Council, could provide direct financial support, by subsidizing the work required to develop and put into operation these special programs.

SUMMARY

83. Through this brief the Canadian Teachers' Federation has attempted to draw to the attention of the Senate Committee the more important of the complex ways in which poverty and public education are intertwined in today's society. As far as possible, statements have been documented by studies of the current situation across Canada. In the course of the brief a number of suggestions have been made regarding ways in which education might assist in the alleviation of poverty. For the convenience of the Committee, these recommendations are collected and re-stated in formal terms below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT some form of guaranteed annual income be established which would enable those presently defined as poor to achieve the goals of adequate housing, clothing and nourishment.

2. THAT the progressive character of income tax be strengthened.

3. THAT education be given priority among possible long-term solutions to the problems of poverty.

4. THAT benefits similar to those provided under the Occupational Training of Adults Act be extended to adults properly enrolled in programs designed to upgrade their standing in elementary and secondary subjects.

5. THAT the federal government collect statistics on the educational characteristics of the population more frequently than once every ten years and that priority in the order of census analyses be given to data dealing with education.

6. THAT analyses of the family background of children of various ages attending school be prepared from census data and published.

7. THAT the federal government provide financial support for all levels of education (elementary, secondary and post-secondary) in regions of the country where there is a clear deficiency in tax-paying ability, relative to the rest of the country.

8. THAT plans be implemented immediately to renovate or replace the substandard schools which still exist in many parts of Canada and which prohibit the offering of modern programs of instruction.

9. THAT greater provision be made for the establishment of kindergarten and preschool programs in Canada and that priority in their establishment be given to communities where the children are poor.

10. THAT efforts be made to involve low-income parents, on both formal and operational bases, in the education of their children.

11. THAT, in particular, further provision be made for the direct involvement of Indians, Metis, Eskimos and Negroes in those policy-making bodies which determine the education of their children.

12. THAT the federal government provide financial assistance to native Canadians attempting to record the history of their people and culture.

13. THAT the federal government contribute financially toward the development of curricula for Indian, Metis and Eskimo children which will include support for the valuable aspects of their own culture.

14. THAT sections of textbooks which are apt to further the discriminatory aspects of Canadian society be removed from future editions.

15. THAT teachers of children from homes where neither English nor French is the first language acquire some knowledge of the language of the home.

16. THAT courses of study be established which will better prepare teachers of Indian, Metis, Eskimo and Negro students to deal with the needs of these students.

17. THAT the federal government provide financial assistance to institutions of higher education to enable them to develop appropriate courses for teaching the teachers of Canada's native peoples.